



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

020
M660
M12
T97
1899

A 986,230

Silver Series of English and American Classics



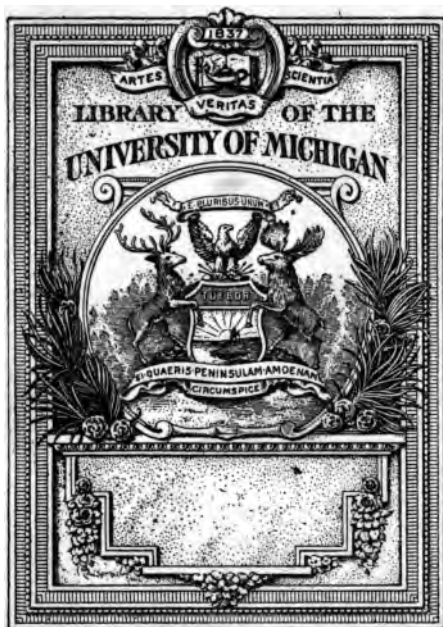
ESSAY ON MILTON

FRANCIS D. MACCALLAN

EDITED BY ALFRED R. WALLACE



Silver, Burdett & Company



THE GIFT OF

8-8

M660

M12

T97

1899



JOHN MILTON.

The Silver Series of English Classics

MACAULAY(S)

— Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1st baronet

ESSAY ON MILTON

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

ALEXANDER S. TWOMBLY



SILVER, BURDETT AND COMPANY

NEW YORK

BOSTON

CHICAGO

1899

COPYRIGHT, 1897,
BY SILVER, BURDETT AND COMPANY.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE SILVER SERIES OF ENGLISH CLASSICS is designed to furnish editions of many of the standard classics in English and American literature, in the best possible form for reading and study. While planned to meet the requirements for entrance examinations to college, as formulated by the Commission of American Colleges, it serves a no less important purpose in providing valuable and attractive reading for the use of the higher grades of public and private schools.

It is now generally recognized that to familiarize students with the masterpieces of literature is the best means of developing true literary taste, and of establishing a love of good reading which will be a permanent delight. The habit of cultured original expression is also established through the influence of such study.

To these ends, carefully edited and annotated editions of the Classics, which shall direct pupils in making intelligent and appreciative study of each work as a whole, and, specifically, of its individual features, are essential in the classroom.

The SILVER SERIES notably meets this need, through the editing of its volumes by scholars of high literary ability and educational experience. It unfolds the treasures of literary art, and shows the power and beauty of our language in the various forms of English composition, — as the oration, the essay, the argument, the biography, the poem, etc.

Thus, the first volume contains Webster's oration at the laying of the corner stone of Bunker Hill monument; and, after a brief sketch of the orator's life, the *oration* is defined, — the speech itself furnishing a practical example of what a masterpiece in oratory should be.

Next follows the *essay*, as exemplified by Macaulay's "Essay on Milton." The story of the life of the great essayist creates an interest in his work, and the student, before he proceeds to study

the essay, is shown in the Introduction the difference between the oratorical and the essayistic style.

After this, Burke's "Speech on Conciliation" is treated in a similar manner, the essential principles of *forensic* authorship being set forth.

Again, De Quincey's "Flight of a Tartar Tribe" — a conspicuous example of pure *narration* — exhibits the character and quality of this department of literary composition.

Southey's "Life of Nelson" is presented in the same personal and critical manner, placing before the student the essential characteristics of the *biographical* style.

The series continues with specimens of such works as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," by Coleridge; the "Essay on Burns," by Carlyle; the "Sir Roger De Coverley Papers," by Addison; Milton's "Paradise Lost," Books I. and II.; Pope's "Iliad," Books I., VI., XXII., and XXIV.; Dryden's "Palamon and Arcite," and other works of equally eminent writers, covering, in the completed series, a large and diversified area of literary exposition.

The functions of the several departments of authorship are explained in simple terms. The beginner, as well as the somewhat advanced scholar, will find in this series ample instruction and guidance for his own study, without being perplexed by abstruse or doubtful problems.

With the same thoughtfulness for the student's progress, the appended Notes provide considerable information outright; but they are also designed to stimulate the student in making researches for himself, as well as in applying, under the direction of the teacher, the principles laid down in the critical examination of the separate divisions.

A portrait, either of the author or of the personage about whom he writes, will form an attractive feature of each volume. The text is from approved editions, keeping as far as possible the original form; and the contents offer, at a very reasonable price, the latest results of critical instruction in the art of literary expression.

The teacher will appreciate the fact that enough, and not too much, assistance is rendered the student, leaving the instructor ample room for applying and extending the principles and suggestions which have been presented.

INTRODUCTION.

MR. GLADSTONE sums up the character and career of Thomas Babington Macaulay by saying that "In a happy childhood (he was born of Scotch descent, at Rothby, October 25, 1800) he evinced extreme precocity. His academical career (Trinity College, Cambridge, 1818) gave sufficient, though not redundant, promise of after celebrity." (He wrote the poem "Pompeii," in 1819, and gained the Chancellor's medal. In 1821, his poem on "Evening" gave him the Craven scholarship.) "The new golden age he imparted to the 'Edinburgh Review,' and his Parliamentary speeches in the grand crisis of the first Reform Bill, achieved for him an immense distinction. He was indeed prosperous and brilliant; a prodigy, a meteor, almost a portent in literary history. But his course was laborious, truthful, simple, independent, noble."

Jeffrey, in acknowledging his manuscript of "Milton," said, "The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style."

"With the essay on Milton," says Matthew Arnold, "began Macaulay's literary career, and, brilliant as that career was, it had few points more brilliant than its beginning."

He was twenty-five years old when he wrote his essay on Milton, and during his life of sixty years and three months he wrote thirty-three essays which were published in the "Edinburgh Review," and four other essays, besides his speeches in Parliament, the speech at his installation as Lord Rector of Glasgow University (1849), and a short speech on retiring from political life the same year.

His most celebrated poems, aside from "Pompeii," "Evening," and "The Battle of Ivry," are his "Lays of Ancient Rome," which, after the manner of Sir Walter Scott, are patriotic, simple, rich in imagery, and often idyllic; but not such as to give him the fame which he won by his prose. Every school-boy knows the versification and the stirring character of "The Battle of Lake Regillus" and "Horatius Cocles."

Macaulay's favorite study was history, which he wove into all his essays, often in the form of biography; and his History of England, two volumes of which were published in 1848, absorbed his mind for the last fifteen years of his life, remaining as a monument of his exact and extensive historical research. Thackeray said, "He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels one hundred miles to make a line of description." Mr. Buckle, author of the "History of Civilization," declared that Macaulay was "perfectly accurate in all the facts which he himself had investigated." His terseness has been compared with that of Tacitus. His power of condensation, aptness of phrase and epithet, and his indomitable industry made him a master of rhetorical effect in the use of his great learning.

In 1834, resigning his seat in Parliament, he was appointed a member of the Supreme Council of India, on a salary of £10,000 a year; and in 1838, returning from India, he had by saving accumulated a fortune of £30,000, which, with a legacy of £10,000 from his uncle, General Macaulay, enabled him to pursue his literary work free from pecuniary anxiety. He remained unmarried, and his intimate intercourse was confined to a few literary men, — his family consisting of his nieces, with whom he spent his later days at Holly Lodge, a charming retreat in Kensington. One of his pleasures was to take the children to see the sights of London, and he was always affected, even to tears, at any touches of pathos in the events around him or in the books he read. He died in December, 1859, and was buried in the Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, having for pall-bearers the most illustrious men of England.

He received during his life distinguished honors, being created a British Peer in 1847; elected Lord High Steward of the Borough of Cambridge; made an honorary member of the academies of Utrecht, Munich, and Turin; a member of the Order of Merit, by the King of Prussia; Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford; and President of the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh.

Macaulay was an essayist rather than an orator, although his speeches in Parliament were elaborated with great painstaking and were models of argument and rhetoric. He did his best in everything he wrote, but he was not a leader. As an historical critic and a man of letters he was without a peer, but he has been criticised as somewhat

lacking in philosophical thought and as sophistical in spirit. His keen analysis and brilliant narration of historical and biographical facts blinded his reader's mind to the strong prejudices which sometimes colored his inductions. "In his own line," says one of his critics, "he had no rival. He kindled a fervent human interest in past and real events, which novelists kindle in fictitious events. This was the peculiarity which fascinated contemporaries and made them so lavish of praise and admiration." Another critic has written, "As a narrator, in his own province, it would be difficult to name his equal among English writers; in it, he exhibited the understanding of Hallam, the knowledge of Mackintosh, joined to the picturesqueness of Southey and the wit of Pope."

We turn now, in connection with our study of Macaulay's "Milton," to the consideration of this great author as a model writer of

THE ESSAY.

There are some striking distinctions between an *essay* and an *oration*.

I. An essay is given out and understood to be *written discourse*; an oration is to be *spoken*,—its aim being to impress auditors by the apparent spontaneity of utterance. In the essay there are a measured flow and elaboration of the ideas which are presented. This kind of discourse is to be read with deliberation, and studied. In the direct address of an oration, there may be a cer-

tain freedom which is not allowed in the essay. The orator speaks as if talking to his audience; his ideas must be caught "on the wing," so to speak; he must appear to think "on his feet"; he is allowed to interpose remarks "on the spur of the moment"; his hearers are given no time to reflect upon his words.

On the other hand, in the essay, the writer is not permitted even the semblance of hasty composition; his manuscript can be revised and corrected; it is supposed to be the result of careful meditation and exact expression. The style of the essay is therefore more precise and guarded. Macaulay wrote about two essays a year, and never allowed his manuscripts to be published until he had written and rewritten them, making any further improvement by his hand impossible. "He thought little of reconstructing a paragraph for the sake of one happy illustration," says his biographer, Trevelyan. He even submitted to the most tiresome mechanical drudgery in the correction of his proof sheets, so that no sentence might pass till it was as good as he could make it. Ralph Waldo Emerson has been charged with carrying conciseness to a degree which did not allow of a sufficient number of words to express the whole meaning of his thought. This fault, if it be a fault, cannot be laid at the door of Macaulay. "The clearness of his thought, amid the profusion of his knowledge, was represented in his writing by a remarkable conciseness of expression."

II. A second characteristic of the essay, in distinction from the oration, concerns the *arrangement in the treatment* of the theme.

1107 B3

The orator, to impress the audience before him, must follow, consciously or unconsciously, certain rules of oratorical art. His discourse must interest his hearers at its beginning, convince them as it proceeds, and appeal to their whole nature at the end in the peroration or persuasive summing up of the subject.

The essay, unaccompanied by audible sounds or gestures, and with the personality of the writer sedulously kept in the background, can have, in the arrangement of ideas, a great variety of methods. The essayist may linger on emphatic sentences, introduce more or less lengthy digressions, and, keeping always the order of antecedents and consequents, may expect the reader to refer back to earlier statements as a guide to conclusions. An essay may rightly begin without a formal proposition, and end without persuasion or exhortation. Sometimes it concludes abruptly, leaving the reader to make his own deductions by a reperusal of the discourse.

Macaulay's essays, with an evident purpose to accomplish, and sometimes having the peculiarity of special pleading throughout the whole discourse, are full of digressions. If they assume to present the character and career of Milton, for example, they weave into the presentation of the man the story of the English Revolution and kindred topics. In the essay on Machiavelli, we have a sketch of Italian history from the fall of the Roman Empire to the time of Lorenzo de Medici, with a learned discussion on Greek civilization and its influence on the Italian character.

In the ~~essay on~~ Dryden, we are treated to a digression

on the Schools of Poetry and the Dramatic Art. The essay on Lord Clive is filled with picturesque or historical statements of affairs in India. Elephants, whose heads were armed with iron plates, tread ponderously over the pages; and the nabobs, disguised and with caskets of jewels in their hands, let themselves down from the windows of their palaces to flee from the British conquerors. The essay is not exhaustive like a book; and sometimes, as in the essay on Frederick the Great, the writer "pauses for the present" and leaves the essay at a point where he promises to resume the story, a manner of procedure not at all allowable in an oration or a speech.

III. One more distinctive feature of the essay which it is necessary to mention is, that it is *more critical and didactic than impassioned*. The essay imparts knowledge; the oration is most effective in enforcing what the audience already knows. The essay dissects and discusses nice points in a subject; the oration deals mainly in rhetorical and eloquent persuasion. The essay has a flexibility which would diminish the energy of oral delivery. The climax is essential in an oration, as it is not in an essay. In an oration, the use of ironical speech and the apostrophe enters more largely than is proper or possible in a written dissertation.

In conclusion, to the students who read Macaulay's essays for the cultivation of their own style in English composition, it must be said that this great master of the art of critical and pictorial writing admits no servile imitators to share the secret of his power. Only his gift of genius, his prodigious industry, his exact and extended

knowledge, and his artistic literary sense can produce the effects which have given Macaulay the place of pre-eminent literary excellence among the writers of the English essay.

By taking him as a model, in his chosen department of critical and literary discourse, the careful study of his style, arrangement of thought, and mental perspective will at least give a standard which is among the highest, and assist in forming habits of literary effort without which the possibility of good English composition cannot for a moment be entertained.

The suggestions for the student by E. A. Freeman, the illustrious historian, contained in his estimate of Macaulay as a model for writers, embody all that needs to be said upon this subject.

"Macaulay," says this eminent scholar and writer, "is a model of style; of style in its practical aspect. Every one who wishes to write pure English will do well to become, not Macaulay's ape, but Macaulay's disciple.

"I learned from Macaulay, that if I wished to be understood by others, or indeed by myself, I must avoid, not always long sentences, but involved, complicated, parenthetical sentences; sentences crowded with relatives and participles; sentences in which things are not so much directly stated as implied in some dark and puzzling fashion.

"I learned also, never to be afraid of using the same word or name over and over again, if by that means anything could be added to clearness and force. Macaulay never goes on, like some writers, talking about 'the

former' and 'the latter,' 'he, she, it, they,' through clause after clause, while his reader has to look back to see which of several persons it is that is so darkly referred to. And with Macaulay's pronouns, it is always perfectly clear who is meant by them.

"Then as to his choice of words. Macaulay never uses a word which, whatever might be its origin, had not really taken root in the language. He has no vulgarisms, no new-fangled or affected expressions. No man was ever so clear from the vice of thrusting in foreign words into an English sentence. In short, Macaulay never allows himself for a moment to be careless, vulgar, or slipshod. Every person and every thing is called by the right name, and no other.

"The care which Macaulay took to write, before all things, good and clear English, may be followed by writers who make no attempt to imitate his style, and who may be led by nature to some quite different style of their own.

"No style can be good where the reader has to read a sentence twice over to find out its meaning. In every language and in every kind of writing, purity of speech and clearness of expression must be the first virtues of all."

Particular attention is directed to the author's structural arrangement of this earlier essay as shown upon the following page.

THE CONSTRUCTIVE FEATURES OF MACAULAY'S ESSAY ON MILTON.

- p. 15. The *Occasion* which suggested the Essay.
- 17. The *Purpose* of the writer in the Essay.
- 18. A *Consideration of Milton's Poetry*.
- 18. *Unfavorable Conditions of his Era*.
- 19. As civilization advances, poetry declines.
- 21. A skeptical age interferes with the poet's "fine frenzy."
- 22. Science and philosophy unfavorable; they destroy or impair creative imagination.
- 23. *Milton's Triumphs*, in spite of these hindrances.
- 24. In Versification.
- 25. In Suggestiveness. Magical influence of his poetry.
- 26. In the use of association of ideas.
- 27. Exception noted. Milton's lyric poems in form of plays, a partial failure. "Comus" and "Samson Agonistes."
- 31. His greatest triumph in "Paradise Lost."
- 31-41. Comparison between Milton and Dante.
- 42. *Character of Milton*.
- 42. His sonnets show dignity and sobriety.
- 43. Macaulay's defense of Milton's public career.
 - Firm in the cause of Liberty (p. 54).
 - Defends the Regicides (p. 56).
 - Stands by Cromwell (p. 57).
- 60. *Milton's Peculiarities*.
 - Not a Puritan, nor a Royalist (p. 67).
 - He stood out among his contemporaries for freedom of the mind, above all for the rights of man (p. 69).
- 70-72. *Conclusion*.
 - Milton's character summed up, as "stamped with the image and superscription of The Most High."
- Noticeable Digressions of the Essayist*.
 - On Poetry (pp. 19-23).
 - Was Resistance to Charles I. justifiable (pp. 44-56) ?
 - On Cromwell, the Puritans, and the Royalists (pp. 58-66).

MACAULAY'S ESSAY ON MILTON.



(AUGUST, 1825.)

Joannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrina Christiana libri duo posthumi. A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By JOHN MILTON, translated from the Original by Charles R. Sumner, M.A., etc., etc.: 1825.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon, deputy keeper of the state papers, in the course of his researches among the presses of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript.¹ With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton while he filled the office of Secretary, and several papers relating to the Popish Trials and the Rye-house Plot.² The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, superscribed *To Mr. Skinner, Merchant*. On examination, the large manuscript proved to be the long-lost essay on the Doctrines of Christianity, which, according to Wood and Toland, Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner.³ Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr. Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under the suspicions of the Government during that persecution of the Whigs which followed the dissolution of the Oxford parliament, and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it has been found. But whatever the ad-

ventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist that it is a genuine relic of the great poet.

Mr. Sumner, who was commanded by his Majesty to edit and translate the treatise, has acquitted himself of his task
5 in a manner honorable to his talents and to his character. His version is not indeed very easy or elegant; but it is entitled to the praise of clearness and fidelity. His notes abound with interesting quotations, and have the rare merit of really elucidating the text. The preface is evidently the
10 work of a sensible and candid man, firm in his own religious opinions, and tolerant towards those of others.

The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. It is, like all his Latin works, well written, though not exactly in the style of the prize essays of Oxford and Cam-
15 bridge. There is no elaborate imitation of classical antiquity, no scrupulous purity, none of the ceremonial cleanness which characterizes the diction of our academical Pharisees. The author does not attempt to polish and brighten his composition into the Ciceronian gloss
20 and brilliancy. He does not, in short, sacrifice sense and spirit to pedantic refinements. The nature of his subject compelled him to use many words

“That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp.”¹

But he writes with as much ease and freedom as if Latin
25 were his mother-tongue; and, where he is least happy, his failure seems to arise from the carelessness of a native, not from the ignorance of a foreigner. We may apply to him what Denham with great felicity says of Cowley.² He wears the garb, but not the clothes, of the ancients.

30 Throughout the volume are discernible the traces of a powerful and independent mind, emancipated from the influence of authority and devoted to the search of truth. Milton professes to form his system from the Bible alone; and his digest of Scriptural texts is certainly among the

best that have appeared. But he is not always so happy in his inferences as in his citations.

Some of the heterodox doctrines which he avows seemed to have excited considerable amazement, particularly his Arianism¹ and his theory on the subject of polygamy.² 5 Yet we can scarcely conceive that any person could have read the *Paradise Lost* without suspecting him of the former; nor do we think that any reader acquainted with the history of his life ought to be much startled at the latter. The opinions which he has expressed respecting 10 the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter, and the observation³ of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise.

But we will not go into the discussion of these points. The book, were it far more orthodox or far more heretical 15 than it is, would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be converted or perverted by quartos. A few more days, and this essay will follow the *Defensio Populi*⁴ to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remark- 20 able circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two it will occupy a few minutes of chat in every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the play-bills, be with- 25 drawn, to make room for the forth-coming novelties.

We wish, however, to avail ourselves of the interest, transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint till they have awakened the devotional 30 feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some relic of him, a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say 35

something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day to commemorate, in all love and
5 reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known; and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak.¹ By the general
10 suffrage of the civilized world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet.
15 The works they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilization, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction,
20 and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his
25 powers, make large deductions in consideration of these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavorable circumstances than Milton. He
30 doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late."² For this notion Johnson has thought fit to make him the butt of much clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius
35 derived no advantage from the civilization which sur-

rounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines.¹ Therefore, though we fervently ad- 5
mire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilized age. We cannot understand 10
why those who believe in that most orthodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely the uniformity of the phenomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause. 15

The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been 20
formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits that hoard, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, 25
even when they fail, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs. Marcet's little dialogues on political economy could teach Montague or Walpole many lessons in finance. Any intelligent 30
man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.

But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The progress 35

of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may indeed improve the instruments which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilized people is poetical.

This change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the effect of a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual operations, of a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalization is necessary to the advancement of knowledge; but particularity is indispensable to the creations of the imagination. In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to analyze human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury; he may refer all human actions to self-interest, like Helvetius; or he may never think about the matter at all. His creed on such subjects will no more influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lachrymal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakspeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the fable of the Bees. But could Mandeville

have created an Iago?¹ Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man, a real, living, individual man?

Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, 5 without a certain unsoundness of mind, if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean not all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical 10 compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colors. Thus the greatest of poets has de- 15 scribed it, in lines universally admired for the vigor and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled:

“As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen 20
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”²

These are the fruits of the “fine frenzy” which he ascribes to the poet, — a fine frenzy, doubtless, but still a 25 frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just, but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, everything ought to be consistent; but those first 30 suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence of all people children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by 35

Hamlet or Lear as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Ridinghood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet, in spite of her knowledge, she believes; she weeps; 5 she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society 10 that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good 15 ones; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the 20 ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek rhapsodists, according to Plato, could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions. The Mohawk hardly feels the scalp-ing-knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised 25 over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilized community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a 30 magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and 35 the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues

and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up^t grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires⁵ to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hindrance to him. His difficulties will¹⁰ be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigor and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man or a¹⁵ modern ruin. We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labor, and long meditation employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.¹²⁰

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education: he was a profound and elegant classical scholar: he had studied all the mysteries of rabbinical literature: he was intimately acquainted with every language of modern²⁵ Europe from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived. He was perhaps the only great poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch² was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though³⁰ much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley,³ with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination: nor, indeed, do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But³⁵

- Johnson had studied the bad writers of the middle ages
7 till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as an habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.
- 5 Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as the flower-
10 pots of a hot-house to the growth of oaks. That the author of the *Paradise Lost* should have written the *Epistle to Manso* was truly wonderful.¹ Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton the
15 artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, his genius gives to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic
20 warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel:

“About him exercised heroic games
The unarmed youth of heaven ; but nigh at hand
Celestial armory, shield, helm, and spear,
Hung bright, with diamond flaming and with gold.”²

- 25 We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his
30 mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt anything like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public has long

been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style which no rival has been able to equal and no parodist to degrade, which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music.¹ In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf. ✓

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the Iliad. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion, but takes the whole upon himself, and sets the images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.²

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they

pronounced, than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence; substitute one synonym for
5 another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying, "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door which obeyed no sound but "Open
10 Sesame." The miserable failure of Dryden in his attempt to translate into his own diction some parts of the *Paradise Lost* is a remarkable instance of this.¹

In support of these observations, we may remark that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more
15 generally known or more frequently repeated than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas.
20 Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and
25 manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the
30 quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.²

In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the *Allegro* and the *Pensero-
35 roso*. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of

language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as attar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close-packed essence from the thin, diluted mixture. They are, indeed, not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.

The *Comus* and the *Samson Agonistes* are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. Both are lyric poems in the form of plays.¹ There are perhaps no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those paste-board pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newbery, in which a single movable head goes around twenty different bodies, so that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavored to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek drama, on the model of which the *Samson* was written, sprung from the ode. The dialogue was ingrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian

dramatists co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was, head and heart, a lyric poet.¹ In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; 5 and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus it should seem that they still looked up, with the veneration of disciples, to Egypt 10 and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is discernible in the works of Pindar and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The Book of Job, 15 indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are absurd; considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytæmnestra to Agamemnon on his return, or the description of the seven Argive chiefs, by the principles of dramatic 20 writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But if we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as 25 dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity, not of a painting, but of a bass-relief. It suggests a resemblance, but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the reform further. But it 30 was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly, 35 much more highly than, in our opinion, Euripides deserved.

Indeed, the caresses which this partiality leads our countryman to bestow on "sad Electra's poet" sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairy-land kissing the long ears of Bottom. At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the Samson Agonistes. Had Milton taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic proprieties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters, as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralize each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

The Comus is framed on the model of the Italian masque,¹ as the Samson is framed on the model of the Greek tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to The Faithful Shepherdess as The Faithful Shepherdess is to the Aminta, or the Aminta to the Pastor Fido.² It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a

kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His muse had no objection to a russet attire; but she turned with disgust
5 from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day. Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the Comus to the distinction which
10 he afterward neglected in the Samson. He made his Masque what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded,
15 wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the
20 illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes,
25 whereunto, I must plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language."¹ The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labor of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral
30 raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly,

"Now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly or I can run,"²

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the Elysian dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia, which the musky winds of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.¹

There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks. Still more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the *Paradise Regained*, which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the blindness of the parental affection which men of letters bear toward the offspring of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the *Paradise Lost*, we readily admit. But we are sure that the superiority of the *Paradise Lost* to the *Paradise Regained* is not more decided than the superiority of the *Paradise Regained* to every poem which has since made its appearance. Our limits, however, prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the *Paradise Lost* is the *Divine Comedy*.² The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appear-

ance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the color, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St. Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.¹

Now let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim imitations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas: his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downward, nevertheless showed so much of him that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr.

Cary's translation is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the *Paradise Lost* with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante.¹ Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes 5 refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery, Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance, Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be 10 if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of 15 settling precedence between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The Divine Comedy is a personal narrative. Dante is the 20 eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death, who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which there is no hope, who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon, who has fled from 25 the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo. His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer. His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation. His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel. The reader would throw aside such a tale in in- 30 credulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of 35

Gulliver. The author of *Amadis* would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift, the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, 5 the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived, nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and we can easily abandon our-
10 selves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, resident at Rotherhithe, tells us of pygmies and giants, flying islands, and philosophizing horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment a deception on the imagination.

15 Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him: and as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a
20 little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery is that of attempting to philosophize too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections,
25 though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phenomena. We cannot explain them into material
30 causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word; but we have no image of the thing; and the business of poetry is with
35 images, and not with words. The poet uses words, indeed;

but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of 5 colors to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of 10 Greece, there is reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of gods and goddesses. In like manner, the ancient 15 Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the worship which, in speculation, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating 20 desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, 25 the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception; but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among 30 men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty 35

legions were humbled in the dust. Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George took the place of Mars. St. Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be embodied before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

From these considerations, we infer that no poet who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical coloring can produce no illusion when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary, therefore, for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been

reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary that the spirit should be clothed with material forms. "But," says he, "the poet should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it 5 from his thoughts." This is easily said; but what if Milton could not seduce his readers to drop immateriality from their thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half-belief which poetry requires? Such 10 we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by so doing, laid himself open to the charge of incon- 15 sistency. But, though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously 20 through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.¹

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton 25 is so. That of Dante is picturesque, indeed, beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of Dante's poem, 30 which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. The supernatural agents excite an interest; but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and demons without any 35

emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company.¹ Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful, ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in
5 strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata is justly celebrated. Still, Farinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Farinata would have been at an *auto da fé*.² Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice.³ Yet what is it
10 but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet, austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

15 The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends, in particular, are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee-faw-fum of Tasso and Klop-
20 stock.⁴ They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

25 Perhaps the gods and demons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the Oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity
30 and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and colossal. The legends of Æschylus seem to harmonize less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticos in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire
35 than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal

granite in which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols. His favorite gods are those of the elder generation, the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart, the gigantic Titans, and the 5
inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven.¹ Prometheus bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impa- 10
tience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture: he is 15
rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his torturer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature 20
is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect 25
of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself.

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we 30
would add that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude their idiosyncrasies on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame who extort a 35

pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, colored by their
 5 personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of spirit; that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the Divine Comedy we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There
 10 is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts
 15 of earth nor the hope of heaven, could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the
 20 Hebrew poet, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness." The gloom of his character discolours all the passions of men, and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of paradise and the glories of the eternal throne. All the
 25 portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive
 30 to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the
 35 great men by whom he had been distinguished at his en-

trance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers were now the favorite writers of the sovereign and of the public. It was a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these Milton's Muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene, to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rout of Satyrs and Goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, they might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes—such it continued to be when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die.

Hence it was that, though he wrote the *Paradise Lost* at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world.¹ Neither Theocritus

nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains.

5 His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy-land, are em-
10 bosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.¹

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works; but it is most strongly displayed
15 in the Sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja in the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple
20 but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the City, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him
25 that beautiful face over which the grave had closed forever, led him to musings, which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterize these little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology,² or perhaps still more of the Collects of
30 the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the Massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.

The Sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified
35 by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not

where to look for a parallel. It would, indeed, be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high and of an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes,¹ liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The friends of liberty labored under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly. Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, the Roundheads had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them as, in the

long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming narrative of Mrs. Hutchinson. May's History of the Parliament is good; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is foolish and violent; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause — Oldmixon, for instance, and Catherine Macaulay — have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candor or by skill. On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of Clarendon and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion, and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned according as the resistance of the people to Charles the First shall appear to be justifiable or criminal.¹ We shall, therefore, make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage-ground; but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority, that we are not unwilling to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We con-

fidently affirm that every reason which can be urged in favor of the Revolution of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favor of what is called the Great Rebellion.¹

In one respect, only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign 5 than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a Papist; we say in name and profession, because both Charles himself and his creature Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of popery, retained all its worst vices, a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form 10 to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant; but we say that his Protestantism does not make the slightest dis- 15 tinction between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men, who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great 20 actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent they pass by what is essential, and take only what is accidental: they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public 25 imitation all that is defective. If in any part of any great example there be anything unsound, these flesh-flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype, that 30

“ Their labor must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil.”

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expul-

✓ sion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights, liberty, security, toleration, all go for nothing with them. One sect there was, which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire there was so unhappily circumstanced, that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America. They stand forth zealots for the doctrine of divine right which has now come back to us like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William is a hero.¹ Then Somers and Shrewsbury are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era. The very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory. They may truly boast that they look not at men, but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it; the arbitrary Charles, or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic, or Frederic the Protestant. On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James the Second was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant Revolution.

But this certainly was not the case; nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's Abridgment² believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions

without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily not to popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic; but they excluded Catholics from the crown because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant was this, "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688 must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this — Had Charles the First broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative, unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the king himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament, had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion mention one act of James the Second to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two Houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of Parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of Parliament had passed without

some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate; the right of petition was grossly violated; arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not
5 justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the Parlia-
10 ment continue to rise in their demands at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship-money had been given up. The Star-chamber had been abolished. Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good
15 by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He, too, had offered to call a free Parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in
20 the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same
25 principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had no doubt passed salutary laws; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives; but where was the security that he would not resume them?
30 The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind, a man who made and broke promises with equal facility, a man whose honor had been a hundred times pawned and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger
35 ground than the convention of 1688. No action of James

can be compared to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right. The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent; the subsidies are voted; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious king who had recognized them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another Parliament; another chance was given to our fathers: were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le roi le veut*? Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavished aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to

Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them.

5 A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow. We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates; and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we
15 are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

20 For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, "a good man, but a bad king." We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our
25 consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table and all his regularity at chapel.

30 We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges
35 had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has

ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has labored, with an art which is as discreditable in an historic work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release. 5

These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest. 10

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which the public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford. They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the Scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their district; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag; all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion. 15 20

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisi- 35

tion been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

5 If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no
10 pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the
15 ferocity and ignorance of the people; and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our civil war. The heads of the church and state reaped only that which they had
20 sown. The government had prohibited free discussion; it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of
25 knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives
30 of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres. It is said that when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without
35 restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to

be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion; and, after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, 5 and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, scepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they 10 point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance; and then ask in scorn where the promised splendor and comfort are to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good 15 government in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake.¹ Those who injured her during the period of her disguise 20 were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterward revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all 25 their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those 30 who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces; and that cure is freedom. When a 35

prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth
5 and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other.
10 The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce; and at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought
15 to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

20 Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of public liberty.¹

We are not aware that the poet has been charged with per-
25 sonal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favorite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the king. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still, we must say, in justice to the many emi-
30 nent persons who concurred in it, and in justice, more particularly, to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the regicides. We have, throughout, abstained
35 from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to

them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter? The king can do no 5
 wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister only ought to be responsible for the acts of the sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffries and retain James? The person of a king is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To dis- 10
 charge cannon against an army in which a king is known to be posted is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other 15
 tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace, and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious mes- 20
 sages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters. When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same 25
 persons who, on the 5th of November, thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our king and governor, can, on the 30th of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on them- 30
 selves and their children.

We do not, we repeat, approve of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excel-
 lent, have their exceptions; nor because we feel any peculiar 35

interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as "a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy;" but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of
5 freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage: his heir, to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father: they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great
10 body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light.
15 The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion; but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling
20 which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done, while the people disapproved of it. But, for
25 the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If anything more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-
30 catchers, who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the "*Æneæ magni dextra*," gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical
35 scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be

doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject 5 on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell — his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was 10 then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he 15 found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, 20 he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself he demanded 25 indeed the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder, or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a veto 30 on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandizing himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington

or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his parliaments questioned the authority.
5 under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell
10 were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not plead-
15 ing for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible.
20 The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English
25 annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honor been better upheld abroad, or the seat of
30 justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition
35 and Advice, were excellent. His practice, it is true, too

often departed from the theory of these institutions. But had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the Parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party.

The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents, sacrificed their own liberty and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the Golden Age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The king cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults and her more degrading gold. The Government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean.¹ In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children.

✓ Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

- 5 Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to take a short survey
- 10 of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhere, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended
- 15 by a crowd of camp-followers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat.
- 20 England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose; who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spit in his face in 1649; who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated in
- 25 Westminster Hall and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn; who dined on calves' heads, or stuck up oak-branches, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance.¹ These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really
- 30 deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have

35 there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to

point them out. For many years after the Restoration, they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they 5 were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, 10 their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers 15 alone that the philosophy of history is to be learned. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

20

“ Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
Che mortali perigli in se contiene :
Hor qui tener a fren nostro a desio,
Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene.” ¹

Those who roused the people to resistance; who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years; who 25 formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen; who trampled down king, Church, and aristocracy; who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no 30 vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations had not 35

the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles the First, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles the Second was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the
5 play, turn from the specious caskets which contain only the Death's head and the Fool's head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.¹

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior
10 beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve
15 him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full
20 on his intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race
25 from him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but his favor; and, confident of that favor, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets,
30 they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces
35 were houses not made with hands; their diadems crowns

of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged; on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which shortsighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion, the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke, screaming, from dreams of everlasting fire.¹ Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year.² Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that

God had hidden his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly
5 but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of
10 judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected
15 to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors, and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made
20 them stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus¹ with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppress-
25 ors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities, insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain, not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach; and we know that, in spite of their hatred of popery, they too often
35 fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and

extravagant austerity, that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstons and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful 5 body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different 10 principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom.¹ Heated by the study of ancient literature, 15 they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines of the French Revolution.² But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout asso- 20 ciates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with 25 perfect candor. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse-boys, gamblers, and bravoës, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under 30 the stricter discipline of the Parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favorable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the king was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the 35

honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, with the mutes who throng their antechambers, and the janizaries who mount
5 guard at their gates. Our Royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction, dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valor, defending without love, destroying
10 without hatred. There was a freedom in their subservency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honor, the prejudices of childhood,
15 and the venerable names of history threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa;¹ and, like the Red-cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth, they scarcely entered at all into the
20 merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant Church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing
25 could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues, courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness,
30 and respect for women.² They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

35 Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which

we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

“As ever in his great taskmaster’s eye.”

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolized by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honor and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as harmonize best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master, and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer,¹ he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listened to the song of the Sirens; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its

bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendor, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person
5 who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the *Penseroso*, which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises
10 his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed, in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents, but his hand is firm. He does naught in hate, but all in honor. He kisses
15 the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendor still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for the species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices
25 against ship-money and the Star-chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton
30 justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these
35 schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling

down the king and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting. 5

“Oh, ye mistook! You should have snatched the wand
And bound him fast. Without the rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless.”¹ 10

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians; for this he forsook them. He fought their 15 perilous battle; but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience 20 from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system, in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular 25 abuses than against those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.²

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself 30 the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear, when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But when his opinion 35

seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth
 5 into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapors, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he main-
 10 tained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce
 15 and regicide. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility.

“Nitor in adversum ; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
 Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.”¹

20 ~ It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which
 25 the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which
 30 his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, “a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.”

We must conclude.² And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves

away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction. We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word, the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavor to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues, the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead; and we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not

been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize; and of these
5 was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not
10 only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot without aspiring to emulate, not indeed
15 the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he labored for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on
20 temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

NOTES.

THE NOTES appended to Macaulay's Essay on Milton are intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. The student is assisted by a certain amount of direct information, but he is, in most cases, referred to books in which he may make researches for himself. He will be benefited by making annotations on his own account, and the judicious teacher will select, from the books referred to in the Notes, such as he deems most suitable for special lines of study.

NOTES.

Page 15. 1. What was Macaulay's *purpose* in writing the essay on Milton? See page 17, line 27.

What was the probable date of Milton's "Treatise on Christian Doctrine"? See Mitford's "Life of Milton," XCVI.; prefatory to "Poetical Works."

2. What was the Rye House Plot?

3. Was "Mr. Skinner, Merchant," the same person as "Cyriac Skinner," to whom Milton dedicated his two sonnets, XXI. and XXII.? See Masson's "Life of Milton."

Page 16. 1. Quintilian. See Smith's "Dictionary Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology," Art. "Quintilianus."

2. Denham and Cowley. See Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," Vol. I.

Page 17. 1. What is Arianism? See "Paradise Lost," Book III. 309 and Book VIII. 403.

2. Milton published in 1644, "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce."

3. "Observation of the Sabbath." Is the word "observation," in the sense of "observance," now used? Why not?

4. "Defensio Populi." Milton's answer to Salmasius, who supported the doctrine of the divine right of kings.

Page 18. 1. Was Milton's poetry appreciated by his contemporaries? See Masson's "Life of Milton."

2. Does Milton's remark, "an age too late," refer to the conditions around him as unfavorable to the production, or to the appreciation, of heroic poetry?

Page 19. 1. Analyze Macaulay's argument on civilization as unfavorable to great works of the imagination.

Make a list of names of the great modern poets, and compare them with ancient bards.

Page 21. 1. Mandeville. See Gosse's "History of Eighteenth Century Literature."

2. "Midsummer Night's Dream," Act V. Sc. 1.

Page 23. 1. What poets, contemporaneous with Macaulay, obtained "dubious success and feeble applause"?

How is Macaulay himself rated as a poet, and what poems did he write?

2. When and where did Petrarch flourish? What did he write? Whose praise did he celebrate in his sonnets? What has Byron said of him in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," Canto IV. xxx.-xxxii.?

3. Cowley. Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," Vol. I.

Page 24. 1. Find translation, Masson's Library Edition, Vol. I.

2. "Paradise Lost," Book IV. 551.

Page 25. 1. Notice the fine summing up by the essayist of the style of Milton's poetry.

2. The student must delay, on this and the following passage, long enough to comprehend the essayist's profound thought on "remoteness of association." Compare some of the best passages of "Paradise Lost" with the finest things in the "Iliad."

Page 26. 1. Read what Johnson ("Lives of the Poets," Vol. II.) says of Dryden's "State of Innocence and Fall of Man."

2. As a specimen, read "Paradise Lost," Book IV. 268-287.

Page 27. 1. Define the *lyric* poem. Symonds' "Greek Poets," Vol. I. Chap. X.

Page 28. 1. Æschylus, Pindar, Sophocles, Euripides. Read parts of J. Addington Symonds' "Studies of the Greek Poets," two volumes, Harper & Brothers, Chaps. XI.-XIV.

Page 29. 1. Italian masque. See article "Masque" in any Encyclopedia.

2. Pastoral Plays. Fletcher, in England, and Tasso and Guarini, in Italy, were the authors.

Page 30. 1. The pastoral poet Theocritus wrote in the Doric dialect. It was less polished than the Ionic or the Attic. This poet lived 284-247 B.C. See Andrew Lang's translation.

2. *Comus*, 1012. Explain the reference by Macaulay to the "Earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis."

Page 31. 1. Who were the Hesperides? Look up the myth of the Golden Apples.

2. Notice here the beginning of Macaulay's digression, which continues to page 42. See remarks on Digressions, Introduction, page 10.

Page 32. 1. Follow out the allusions to Dante's "Divina Commedia"; see "Inferno," Longfellow's translation.

Page 33. 1. The student should write out an analysis of Macaulay's comparison between Milton and Dante, giving, in brief, the points of difference.

Page 37. 1. For a discussion on Milton's conception of supernatural beings, see "Masterpieces of Michelangelo and Milton," Part II. Published by Silver, Burdett & Co.

Page 38. 1. Don Juan. Not Byron's, but a legendary character of southern Europe, embodying sensuality and want of faith.

2. Farinata. "Inferno," X. See note 32, Longfellow's translation.

3. Beatrice. "Purgatorio," XXX., XXXI.

4. Tasso. For different aspects of this poet, see translation of "Jerusalem Delivered," Book I. xiii., xiv. and Book IV. iv., v. Klopstock, "Messias," Canto II.

Page 39. 1. Prometheus, "half-fiend, half-redeemer." To understand this allusion, read article "Prometheus" in the Encyclopædia Britannica.

Page 41. 1. How old was Milton when he wrote "Paradise Lost," and how many years was he engaged in writing it? See Masson's "Life of Milton."

Page 42. 1. Read Milton's description of Eve, IX. 425; also Raphael's recital about the birds, VII. 433.

2. Anthology. A collection of Greek epigrams, Bohn's translation (Classical Library).

Page 43. 1. Two principles of good and evil in Persian mythology.

Page 44. 1. Notice here another long digression, pages 44-54.

Page 45. 1. What was the Great Rebellion, so-called?

Page 46. 1. What William is here alluded to? Who were Somers and Shrewsbury? See Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. IV.

2. Goldsmith's Abridgment. The essayist sneers at this crude and unreliable history of England by Goldsmith.

Page 53. 1. "Orlando Furioso," XLIII.

Page 54. 1. The essayist now returns to consider further the character of Milton. Then follows another digression on the Regicides, and again (page 57) on Cromwell.

Page 59. 1. What does the word "Maranatha" mean when coupled with "Anathema"?

Page 60. 1. Read Chambers' "Book of Days," I. 192 and 693, for explanation of these allusions to fickle politicians of Milton's time.

Page 61. 1. Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered," Book XV. 57, Fairfax' translation.

"See here the stream of laughter, see the spring
(Quoth they) of danger and of deadly pain;
Here, fond desire must by fair governing
Be rul'd, our lust bridled with wisdom's rein."

